

## Results and Discussion

### Awareness and Concerns About Chronic Wasting Disease

This section addresses landowner awareness and concerns about CWD to better understand the perceptions of risk attributed to the disease. In particular, this part of the report addresses the impact of CWD on hunting and the deer population, as well as, perceptions of exaggerated risk.

Respondents were asked the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with numerous issues related to CWD, focusing on the questionable risks associated with the disease. Responses were recorded on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 represents “strongly disagree”, 4 represents “neither agree nor disagree”, and 7 represents “strongly agree.” In general, the majority of respondents believe that CWD may pose a risk to the health of humans, livestock, and the deer herd (Table 1).

**Table 1 indicates that** landowners in the DEZ did not disagree with a single item about CWD and the questionable risks associated with the disease. Although no issue had a mean value below 4 (i.e., no issue had a mean score that fell within the disagree values), there were no mean scores that equated to moderate (score = 6) or strong agreement (score = 7).

More than seven landowners in ten (72%) agree that CWD may pose a risk to livestock but not enough is known to be certain (mean score 5.1) (Table 1).

Approximately two-thirds of the landowners agree that: because of CWD their family members have concerns about eating venison (68% agree, mean score = 5.0); CWD may pose a risk to humans but not enough is known to be sure (68% agree, mean score = 4.9); CWD should be eliminated from the wild deer herd (67% agree, mean score = 4.8); and because of CWD they personally have some concerns about eating venison (64% agree, mean score = 4.6) (Table 1).

Just over one-half of the landowners agree that: the threat of CWD has been exaggerated (56% agree, mean score = 4.5); CWD may pose a risk to deer but not to humans (55% agree, mean score = 4.4); and CWD may cause disease in humans if they eat venison from an infected deer (51% agree, mean score = 4.4) (Table 1).

Less than one half of the landowners agree that: the Wisconsin DNR exaggerated the threat CWD poses to the deer herd (48% agree, mean score = 4.1) and that the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) exaggerated the threat CWD poses to human health (41% agree, mean score = 4.0) (Table 1).

Please note that landowners are more likely to agree that the threat of CWD has been exaggerated than to agree that the Wisconsin DNR or DHFS specifically have exaggerated the threat.

**Table 1.** Perceived risks of CWD. (Means followed by the same letter are not statistically different at the  $\alpha=0.05$  level; means which are **not** followed by the same letter are significantly different).

Perceived Risk	Percent “Slightly” to “Strongly” Agree (Scores 5 – 7)	Mean Score <sup>a</sup>
May pose risk to livestock but not enough is known to be sure	72	5.1 A
Family members have concerns about eating venison	68	5.0 AB
May pose risk to humans but not enough is known to be sure	68	4.9 B
CWD should be eliminated from wild deer herd	67	4.8 B
I have concerns about eating venison	64	4.6 C
The threat of CWD has been exaggerated	56	4.5 CD
May pose risk to deer but not to humans	55	4.4 CD
May cause disease in humans if they eat venison from infected deer	51	4.4 DE
DNR has exaggerated the threat CWD poses to wild deer	48	4.1 E
DHFS has exaggerated the threat CWD poses to human health	41	4.0 F

<sup>a</sup> Responses were recorded on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 represents “strongly disagree,” 4 represents “neither agree nor disagree,” and 7 represents “strongly agree.”

The focus group participants had this to say about their knowledge of the risk associated with CWD:

*One of the things that I initially was concerned with was would this disease carry into cattle, and so forth? But I did attend a three-day symposium in Denver, Colorado for the Dane County Board. Of course, we listened to numerous speakers on the whole issue. I came away pretty confident that this disease has been there 30 years and has never got into cattle. Therefore, I was pretty satisfied that CWD would be almost harmless or negative to any humans or to cattle, which was my biggest concern. After coming away from there, listening to the numerous speakers I was pretty confident that we were okay. And I feel better today about it than I ever have.*

*I can't say that I ever even heard of anybody getting a runny nose from eating CWD deer, and that's a great thing. As far as our cattle, it would be a different story if you heard there were problems with it...*

*We were born and raised on venison. I think none of us would butcher a sick deer that looked drooling. Anything that looks good we eat...I had one positive that we shot not too long ago and we fed it to an animal. I wanted to see what it would do. I have a lot of dogs and I had a dog I didn't really care for. It didn't affect him. I do a lot of trapping and the coyotes eat the carcasses. I work with you people, the DNR, catching skunks and raccoon and it hasn't spread to them. If I shot a nice healthy one here I would definitely eat it.*

*Most of my CWD fears now aren't really for the meat or consuming it or anything, it's what the DNR is going to do about it. It's the concern for our hunting tradition. Those are my only fears. My family, we had venison tonight. My wife is eating it and she's feeding it to the children so she's over that initial fear and shock. So, next year I'll be back hunting. We can consume four or five deer a year, my family alone. Next year I will be back hunting. I love to hunt.*

*A lot of [hunters] I talked to won't eat it unless they've had it tested... And they worry about the locker that processed it that might have had it.*

*I don't know if the DNR knows but to me it's a concern if CWD becomes BSE. If it does we're going to all be looking for a new occupation. I guess to me that is one reason really I'm in favor of eradication.*

*My wife quit eating [venison] right away. I don't even bring it home. I don't know what I would do if I shot a deer. I haven't shot one since this happened. Not that I haven't seen one or haven't been out there hunting. I just like being out there. I can put my scope on them and boy that would be a nice deer, but my wife wouldn't cook it if I brought it home.*



Respondents were also asked how concerned they were about numerous issues related to CWD, especially the impact of CWD on hunting and the deer population. Responses were on a 9-point scale where 1 represents “not at all concerned” and 9 represents “extremely concerned.” The scale was then collapsed so that responses 1 to 4 represents “no to low concern” and 5 to 9 represents “some to extremely high concern” (Table 2).

**Table 2 shows that** landowners are more concerned about the health of the deer herd and the future of deer hunting in Wisconsin than they are about their own personal health due to CWD.

Almost two-thirds of the landowners (64%) express some concern for the health of the deer herd in Wisconsin (Table 2). More than one-half of the landowners are concerned about: CWD spreading throughout the statewide deer population (57% concerned, mean score = 5.1); the risk of CWD jumping to livestock (56% concerned, mean score = 5.2); the risk CWD poses to the future of deer hunting in Wisconsin (54% concerned, mean score = 4.9); the safety of venison from deer in the DEZ (53% concerned, mean

score = 4.9); the potential for CWD control efforts to kill the entire deer population in the DEZ (53% concerned, mean score = 4.8); and the potential for CWD control efforts to discourage hunters from hunting in the DEZ (52% concerned, mean score = 4.8) (Table 2).

About two-fifths or more of the landowners are concerned about: the potential for CWD to greatly reduce the deer population in Wisconsin (46% concerned, mean score = 4.5); not having enough healthy deer left to hunt in the DEZ (42% concerned, mean score = 4.2); the safety of venison from areas where CWD has not been detected (40% concerned, mean score = 4.0); and not having enough healthy deer left to hunt in Wisconsin (38% concerned, mean score = 4.1) (Table 2).

About three landowners in ten express high concern over: the potential for CWD to kill the entire deer population in the DEZ (30% concerned, mean score = 3.5); the potential for CWD to kill the entire deer population in Wisconsin (29% concerned, mean score = 3.4); and their own personal health as a result of CWD (28% concerned, mean score = 3.4) (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Concerns about CWD. (Means followed by the same letter are not statistically different at the  $\alpha=0.05$  level; means which are **not** followed by the same letter are significantly different.)

Because of CWD, how concerned are you about...	Percent High Concern	Mean Score <sup>a</sup>
...the health of the deer population in Wisconsin?	64	5.5 A
...CWD spreading throughout the statewide deer population?	57	5.1 B
...the risk of CWD jumping to livestock?	56	5.2 B
...the risk CWD poses to the future of deer Hunting in Wisconsin?	54	4.9 C
...the safety of venison from deer in the DEZ?	53	4.9 C
...the potential for CWD control efforts to kill the entire deer population in the DEZ?	53	4.8 C
...the potential for CWD control efforts to discourage hunters from hunting in the DEZ?	52	4.8 C
...the potential for CWD to greatly reduce the deer population in Wisconsin?	46	4.5 D
...not having enough healthy deer left to hunt in the DEZ?	42	4.2 D
...the safety of venison from areas where CWD has not been detected?	40	4.0 E
...not having enough healthy deer left to hunt in Wisconsin?	38	4.1 E
...the potential for CWD to kill the entire deer population in the DEZ?	30	3.5 F
...the potential for CWD to kill the entire deer population in Wisconsin?	29	3.4 G
...your own personal health?	28	3.4 FG

<sup>a</sup> Responses were on a 9-point scale where 1 represents “not at all concerned” and 9 represents “extremely concerned.” The scale was then collapsed so that responses 1 to 4 represents “no to low concern” and responses 5 to 9 represents “some to extremely high concern”.